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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-fifth session
Open-ended inter-sessional ad hoc working group
on a permanent forum for indigenous people
Geneva, 15-19 February 1999
Item 4 of the provisional agenda

Proposals for the possible establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous people

Information from non-governmental organizations

In its resolution 1998/20 of 9 April 1998, the Commission on Human Rights decided to establish an open-ended inter-sessional ad hoc working group to elaborate and consider further proposals for the possible establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous people within the United Nations system. The Commission requested the ad hoc working group to take into account in its work the comments received from indigenous and non-governmental organizations. The present document contains information received from a non-governmental organization. Any further information from indigenous or non-governmental organizations will be made available in addenda to the present document.

INTERNATIONAL WORK GROUP FOR INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

[22 January 1999]
[Original: English]

The Arusha Declaration on the Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples Within the United Nations

We the indigenous representatives from Africa, meeting in Arusha, Tanzania,

Recalling the recommendation from the World Conference on Human Rights pertaining to the establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous peoples within the United Nations,

Bearing in mind that the goal of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (1995-2004) is to strengthen international cooperation in order to solve problems faced by indigenous peoples,

Recalling that the General Assembly has identified the establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous peoples within the United Nations as one of the major objectives of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People,

Supporting existing indigenous declarations on the establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous peoples, in particular the Temuco, Kuna Yala, Indore and Arctic indigenous declarations,

We call for a speedy creation of a permanent forum for indigenous peoples within the United Nations;

The permanent forum should be established at the highest possible level within the United Nations, and no lower than at the level of the Economic and Social Council;

Indigenous peoples and Governments should be members of the permanent forum, with the right to vote. An equal number of indigenous and governmental representatives should be elected as members for a period of four years;

Indigenous organizations, communities and peoples and Governments that are not members of the forum, should, together with non-governmental organizations, United Nations agencies and individual experts be invited to participate as observers at the meetings of the permanent forum;

The mandate of the permanent forum should be broad enough to cover the concerns of indigenous peoples, including cultural, civil, political and economic rights, health issues, the rights of women and children, education, development, the environment, human rights and conflict prevention and resolution;

The creation of the permanent forum, and its activities, should be funded through the regular budget of the United Nations; and

A separate secretariat should be created for the permanent forum, staffed by qualified indigenous persons.